

# THEA CAPITOL HILL RALLY AND RECEPTION DAY

Tuesday, April 4th, 2017

**"THE PRICE OF LIBERTY IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE."**

On Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the request of state Senator Rusty Crowe of NE TN, Claiborne Thornton, President of THEA, testified before a sales tax sub-committee of our state Senate's Finance, Ways & Means Committee about granting tax-exempt status for certain educational materials for home schoolers. Claiborne also participated in meetings on this topic in '07 with the Commissioner of Revenue at the request of Representatives Mike Bell and Delores Gresham as this issue was being examined from the House side of our state legislature.

## **WHAT IS THEA?**

Founded in 1984, the Tennessee Home Education Association, THEA, like all of the state home school organizations across America, was founded by home educating families as the modern home schooling movement began. The common purpose of these organizations is to protect the rights of home schoolers and to promote and strengthen home education within each state.

As the modern home schooling movement burst on the American scene, a tremendous battle for the control of education and the rights of parents to home school erupted in every state across America.

As our family struggled to understand the path we should walk in this turbulent time, we sought counsel of national home school leaders. Claiborne was personally counseled and encouraged by home school pioneer Dr. Raymond Moore, that we must band together or be picked off one by one.

In every state including Tennessee, the battle for home school freedom was intensely focused on two fronts; the state legislature and the court room. We took Dr. Moore's counsel when he came to speak at the first ever Home School Conference in Tennessee and banded together to form the Tennessee Home Education Association, THEA. We joined together for the purpose of protecting our rights as parents to home educate.

## **THE BATTLE FOUGHT IN THE COURTS**

At this time, the early to mid 1980's, there were five home schooling families in Tennessee who were charged with truancy with the parents facing jail time or in two instances, the parents had already spend time incarcerated for their home schooling. In some cases the home schooling families had also been charged with abuse and neglect, which in Tennessee law can be tied to the truancy charge. With the abuse and neglect conviction children can be removed from the home and placed in foster care. One of our families in Hamilton County charged with truancy, abuse and neglect sent their children across the state line to Georgia to hide them from the state.

## **THE BATTLE FOUGHT IN THE LEGISLATURE**

With the ruling of two different Judges in these court cases the legal battle moved from the court rooms of Tennessee to our state legislature. The Judges ruled that the Tennessee Compulsory Attendance Statute, which is the law regulating schooling in Tennessee, was "unconstitutionally vague" because it did not clearly define what constituted a private school. Home educators were quite logically asserting that their home schools were private schools. These rulings mandated that our state legislature rewrite the Compulsory Attendance Statute to clearly define private schools.

Tennessee home schoolers knew this was our God-given opportunity to impact our state lawmakers to include home education in our state law and clearly delineate the rights of parents to home school. The battle was intense. While we still had no home school law in Tennessee, brave families testified before our Senate Education Committee, explaining how they schooled their children, showing them their curriculum, their daily schedules, even test results. We called our legislators, wrote them, and traveled to the Capitol numerous times to meet individually with them. It was intense.

The Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee Education Association (the teacher's Union) did not want Tennessee law to give parents this freedom, so they worked very hard against us to require as much state

regulation as possible. The current law was passed in Spring of 1985. It is not the best law in America, but in Tennessee, we have freedom to home school within boundaries that are not too burdensome or restrictive and when we are truly home educating, we can do so without prosecution, without charges of truancy, threat of jail or loss of our children to the state.

### **THEA CAPITOL RALLY & RECEPTION DAY from 1985 to 2017**

In March 1985, before the Tennessee home education law passed our state legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Lamar Alexander in May 1985, THEA hosted our first ever Rally Day at the Tennessee state Capitol. Our purpose was to inform our legislators of just what we were about in our home schooling. Claiborne said, "Let's bring the good report of home education to them," because our enemies had launched many terrible rumors about what we were about.

So THEA reserved the cafeteria in the Legislative Plaza for an evening presentation of home education. Families, with some trepidation as our law still did not allow home education, came from across the state to display, on the many tables, their curriculum, their science and 4-H exhibits and other school projects. Support groups provided the food, while home school young ladies served our legislators these home-made treats in a lovely reception. Families met their legislators and explained to them our unique style of education.

### **THE RALLY" Don't Miss Tuesday, April 4th, 2017**

Every year since, THEA has hosted a Day on Capitol Hill for the very same purpose, to inform our legislators of the benefits of home education, to "bring the good report of home education" to them. Now we rent the War Memorial Auditorium, WMA, and gather from all across Tennessee to celebrate home schooling.

This year, we'll gather on Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> in the WMA on Capitol Hill for our program which begins at 8:45 a.m. and concludes at 11:00 a.m. The Nashville Notes and THEA Honor Band with student musicians from across the state will perform. We will have two Home school quires, a Jazz band and many more. Legislators will be honored for their efforts to protect our rights. Outstanding Students, two from each of the THEA chapters, will be honored. Michael Donnelly, HSLDA Attorney for Tennessee, will be with us to celebrate encourage. Special speakers will address us, including the Junior and Senior first place winners of the Sara Lee Harris Worldview Oratory Contest.

### **PRIVATE APPOINTMENTS WITH YOUR TWO LAWMAKERS**

One of the most important parts of our Rally Day is your appointments with your state Senator and state Representative. We are still about "bringing the good report of home education to them." Your personal visit with your lawmakers is the best, most effective way to do this. Please do this! Call ahead, call and make a 10-15 minute appointment with your two lawmakers. Dads and Moms take your family, take your children. Tell them that you wish to meet them as you'll be on Capitol Hill for Rally Day. Plan to bring them a letter from your children, thanking them for their service to our state. Take your camera and have a picture made with them. They are your representatives. They want to know you, their constituents. Go knowing that you represent home schoolers, knowing that you are continuing to protect our freedoms to home school in Tennessee. Here's a "Find Your Legislator" link, use your voter registration card to check your district number. Go to this link: <http://www.legislature.state.tn.us>,

### **COOKIE DELIVERY**

The West Tennessee Home Education Association, WTHERA, the chapter of THEA between Memphis and Nashville, has for over a decade prepared 180 dozen Cookies and sweet treats in our signature Red, White & Blue gift bags with the sticker "A Treat from Home" for you and your family to take to the staff of your lawmakers. Each bag will also have the full-color Rally Day program to be given to your lawmakers to read about our Rally and to see the pictures and bullet point bios of the Outstanding Students from their part of the state. WE NEED YOU to take these with you to the offices of your legislators. Plan to take these when you visit them for your appointments. Pick them up at the COOKIE tables before you go to your appointments. Dads and Moms bring your children, visit your legislators, represent Tennessee home educators and count this a great civics lesson for your children!

### **DISPLAY TABLES**

As almost all groups which lobby our state lawmakers, we reserve the hallway space along the walls in the Legislative Plaza for you to bring your student's Science Projects, Sports and Mock Trial trophies, 4-H exhibits, support group tri-folds. All of these give a visual presentation to our lawmakers of the vibrancy and accomplishments of home educators, they bring the good report of home education! (***You must reserve a table in advance.*** For more info go to THEA website and click contact us.)

### **LEGISLATOR'S LUNCHEON RECEPTION**

THEA serves all our legislators and their staff a luncheon on Rally Day. About 500 people go through our Reception line, manned by home school teens serving them a Tennessee lunch of Bar-B-Que, coleslaw, potato salad, grasshopper bars (made by Rutherford County home school Moms and daughters) and tea. While our legislators and their staff goes through the Reception line, our student musicians entertain them with beautiful music. We have featured harp music, flutes, guitar, string players in large groups, solos, trios and quartets. All of these home educators are "bringing the good report of home education" as we join together to present our unique educational endeavors to our lawmakers.

### **SPEECH & DEBATE HIGHLIGHTED**

Once again Rally Day will highlight two Speech and Debate activities sponsored by the Christian Communicators of Tennessee, CCT, THEA's sister organization. See [www.cctennessee.org](http://www.cctennessee.org) and [www.tnhea.org](http://www.tnhea.org) for more information.

### **STUDENT CONGRESS TOURNAMENT: The Davy Crockett Statesman's Debate Tournament**

The Davy Crockett Statesman's Debate Tournament

Homeschool Students are writing bills. Those bills will be distributed prior to the event. On the days of the Student Congress the homeschool Representatives will use parliamentary procedures to work for passage or defeat of the bills, will make amendments to any bill, perhaps modifying the bill entirely, and then vote on the bill. The entire proceedings of the events are led by a Presiding Officer, also a homeschool student.

The procedures used in Student Congress parallel the work of the US Congress and Senate, the Tennessee Senate and House, the local County Commission or City Council and the local school board, plus many other organizations. Families have found their family meetings impacted by the use of these procedures.

For information about entering this Tournament, go to [www.cctennessee.org](http://www.cctennessee.org)

If you are not participating as a student Senator, you are invited to come over to the Senate Chamber and observe the Student Congress from the upstairs gallery. You can come and go, but do so quietly.

### **SARA LEE HARRIS WORLDVIEW ORATORY CONTEST**

Once again, THEA will award cash prizes for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners of the Sara Lee Harris Worldview Oratory Contest in both the Junior and Senior Divisions. In the Junior Division the contest is an Apologetics Competition. The Senior Division is a Mars Hill Competition. For more information on these events, how to enter, details on the guidelines and criteria of these speeches, go to:

[www.cctennessee.org](http://www.cctennessee.org) and/or [www.tnhea.org](http://www.tnhea.org).

### **VOLUNTEER TO HELP**

We need You! If you wish to help in some way make this Day effective and powerful, please contact Lana Thornton at [lane.thornton@gmail.com](mailto:lane.thornton@gmail.com) or call WTHERA @731-784-8117. If we can't take your call, please leave a message with your phone number and we'll be sure to get back to you!

### **HOME SCHOOLERS OF TENNESEE**

Let's join together to bring the good report of home education to our lawmakers. By doing so we corporately bring a strong message to those who make our laws that home schooling is thriving in Tennessee, that the rights of parents must be protected and guaranteed by our state laws and we are here to hold our lawmakers accountable!

Make your appointments with your legislators now! See you on Tuesday, April 4th!!